

**State of Connecticut**  
**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**



**COMMISSION ON CHILDREN**

**CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON CHILDREN**  
**Minutes of Meeting**

**State Capitol, Conference Room 410**  
**Hartford, Connecticut**

**Tuesday, April 11, 2006**  
**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Voting members present:** George Coleman, James P. Cordier, Representative Andrew M. Fleischmann, Mary Fox, Dr. Alex Geertsma, Alison Hilding, Josh Piteo, Mary Grace Reed and Laura Lee Simon.

**Ex officio members (or designees) present:** Department of Public Health (Norma Gyle), Judge Michael Mack and Department of Mental Retardation (Commissioner Peter O'Meara).

**Members absent:** Department of Children and Families (Rudy Brooks), Judith A. Busch, Office of Policy and Management (Anne Foley), Department of Social Services (Sylvia Gafford-Alexander), Senator Mary Ann Handley, Department of Correction (Mary Johnson), Representative Michael Lawlor, Senator Christopher Murphy, Attorney General (Susan Pearlman), Leslie Wolfgang and John Yrchik.

**Commission staff present:** Elaine Zimmerman, Thomas Brooks, Elizabeth Brown, Patricia Estill, Kevin Flood, Dawn Homer-Bouthiette, Rachel Levy and Edie Luciano.

**Handouts:** Agenda; Minutes for September 13, 2005 and November 15, 2005, Appropriations Budget Highlights, 2006 Legislative Session Update Early Childhood Proposed Legislation, Comments for the Adoption and foster Care Task Force – January 9, 2006, All Children can Read by Fourth Grade: Early Language and reading Success, Substitute Bill No. 5254 An Act Concerning State Investment in Prevention and Child Poverty Reduction, Frameworks Institute Powerpoint: Getting Prevention Right in CT, All Youth Ready at 21, Letter from Commissioner Betty Sternberg dated March 31, 2006 regarding *Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies*, Revised Commission Meeting dates for the remainder calendar year and Save the Date for the PLTI Graduation – Saturday, June 24, 2006.

**Meeting Convened**

Chair James Cordier called the meeting to order at 10:11 a.m.

**Legislative update**

Mr. Cordier began the meeting by giving the Commission an update on the status of several Commission-supported bills pending in the legislature, cautioning that they still needed final approval from the full House and Senate. To date, he reported:

- Significant resources were earmarked for early care and education, including 500 more preschool slots, \$1.5 million for Care4Kids, and \$1.6 million for a database to evaluate the longitudinal impact of a comprehensive school readiness investment.
- The Children's Health Council stood to receive funds for tracking early health care access and utilization for children.
- The Birth to Three system was expected to receive just under \$1 million to help with staffing and turnover issues.
- The LAMP program was expected to receive \$2 million to address lead toxicity in children.

He also reported that the Commission has launched Parents Supporting Educational Excellence, or ParentsSee, a program that trains parents to work as partners in their schools. The program – founded in partnership with the Center for School Change – is operating in New Britain, Stamford, Norwalk, and Windsor, with the support and enthusiasm of the school leadership.

**Nominating Committee**

Mr. Cordier named three Commission members – Dr. Geertsma, Ms. Reed, and Ms. Hilding – to serve on a committee tasked with nominating a slate of officers for 2005-2006. They are to report at the May 9 Commission meeting.

**Calendar of Meetings**

Mr. Cordier referred members to the schedule of upcoming meetings in their packets and noted that the next meeting, on May 9, will include a presentation on child nutrition and child obesity.

**Approval of minutes**

Ms. Simon moved to approve the minutes of the September 13, 2005, meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Geertsma. Approval was unanimous, with Mr. Cordier leaving additional voting open to late-arriving members.

Mr. Piteo moved to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2005, meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Geertsma. Approval was unanimous, with Ms. Reed abstaining. Mr. Cordier left additional voting open to late-arriving members.

**Announcements**

Commission Executive Director Elaine Zimmerman reported that the U.S. Attorney General's office has requested the Commission's input on spending \$1 million in new federal funds to promote parent engagement in Connecticut schools, citing the Commission's growing reputation in this area. She said discussions with federal officials are continuing.

Ms. Zimmerman also reported on the success of her speech at a March 26-29 conference in Chicago to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Family Support America, formerly the Family Resource Coalition. Before an audience of about 1,000, she presented some of the artwork created by Connecticut students for the Commission's January 24, 2006, forum, "Children in the Wake of Terrorism and Natural Disaster: Students Respond in Prose, Poetry, and Art." Among those touched by what the students expressed was Children's Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman, who asked permission to put poster-size recreations of the artwork in New Orleans storefronts, to counter concerns among the children there that no one outside the city understands their plight in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Ms. Zimmerman said she presented the Commission's book of the artwork, along with some of the student writing, to Edelman during Edelman's recent visit to Connecticut. She added that Director of Policy and Research Analysis Thomas Brooks is working with the state attorney general's office on a method for the CDF to obtain permission from the students' families to use the work.

Mr. Piteo asked whether the artwork had become the Commission's property, making the permission process unnecessary. Mr. Brooks replied that the Commission may use the work for its events but ultimately doesn't have ownership of it and therefore can't confer rights to a third party. Ms. Zimmerman added that the Commission is also working out permission rights with the state Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS), which would like to use some of the student artwork in a public-awareness campaign.

**Pending legislation and budget items**

Legislative Director Elizabeth Brown said she is optimistic about the fate of several Commission-backed bills pending in the legislature, including ones that would add funding for school readiness and school nutrition. A bill aimed at bolstering lead screening is in difficulty, she said. Alison Hilding lamented that, noting that other states, including Massachusetts, have taken greater strides in lead protection than Connecticut.

Commission members also discussed the highly publicized provision of the school nutrition bill that would prohibit soda and similar soft drinks from school vending machines. Mary Grace Reed observed that much of the opposition may stem from local boards of education resisting a growing number of state mandates on them. Board members agreed that regardless of the bill's fate, more education on obesity is needed.

Ms. Zimmerman reported that a key initiative of this legislative session is the prevention bill supported by House Speaker James Amann. If adopted, it would require the state to earmark more money on programs on preventing poor outcomes for children, rather than spending money on crisis. She said the measure has drawn support from lawmakers of both parties.

### **Prevention Initiative**

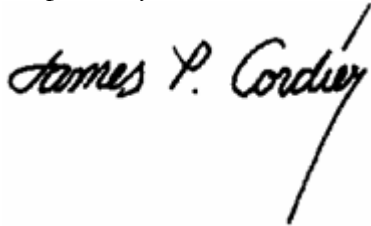
Laura Lee Simon gave an update on plans for a prevention media campaign she is coordinating with the Commission, Connecticut Public Television, the National League of Cities, and the Center for Economic Development. So far, she said, about two-thirds of the necessary funding has been raised, and the campaign is expected to launch sometime in the fall of this year.

Ms. Zimmerman noted that a media consultant, Frameworks, analyzed public response to the word “prevention” and found that it can be loaded term for many, often connoting increased government spending and little else. But when prevention is broken down into certain objectives, such as brain development of preschool education, most of those same people see the investment as worthwhile. Ms. Zimmerman said the Frameworks analysis will be kept in mind as planning for the media campaign progresses.

### **Closing**

Mr. Cordier closed the meeting at 12:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James P. Cordier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping line extending from the end of the name.

James P. Cordier  
Chair